The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters of current interest occurring in the industrial, legislative, and political fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WHOLE NO. 1584 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1941 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 31, NO. 33

FACING the FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

Most people would like to try to forget about the war in Europe for a while but it is affecting our daily lives more and more each day. The blunt facts are that we may still escape direct intervention in the war itself but we cannot escape its effects.

In one sense, the recent meeting at sea between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill was reassuring. That is the flat statement by the President after his safe return that the conference did not bring the United States any nearer to war.

Another encouraging feature of the historic meeting was the joint declaration of peace aims issued by the leaders of the two countries. Americans will be able to find no fault with this eight-point program, other than that it was couched in vague terms. Even this is readily understandable in view of the indecisiveness of the war situation. But it is obvious by now that this statement of peace aims was not directed so much at the American and British people as at the oppressed men and women under the harsh rule of Hitler and his fellow dictators. To them it gave promise of a square deal and future peace once they are able to throw off the yoke of totalitarianism.

What About Russia?

What we would really like to know about this conference at sea, however, were the things that were not revealed and probably won't be until the war is over. Secrecy may be all right for the dictators, but the American and British people have an unconquerable desire to know what it is all about when their future is being decided for them.

And another thing that is somewhat disturbing to most Americans is the question of just how far this country is being committed in aiding the defense of Soviet Russia.

Out of the sea conference came the announcement that a three-power parley would be held in Moscow in the near future—with representatives of the United States, Great Britain and Joe Stalin participating—to determine how Anglo-American assistance to the Soviets can be speeded.

Now there's a situation that must give us pause. We're resigned to the fact that we must help Russia but we have no at all to team pals up with the allies with that guy Stalin. In many respects Stalin and Communism are just as hateful to the American people as Hitler and Nazism.

The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor has summed up the attitude of the great majority of American workers on this important question in a recent statement on foreign policy.

"An ancient saying tells us that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. An even greater enemy, since it is more of a direct threat to our safety, is Nazi Germany. It is good sense for us to help one of our enemies lick an even more dangerous enemy, but it is the same of common-sense don't let's make pals of either of them in the process.

Split-Up Between Pals

It is an inescapable truth that Soviet Russia is not a democracy. Her form of Government is just as totalitarian as that of Nazi Germany. In fact, only up to a couple of months ago, Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany were allied against the democracies. Their sudden split-up has given the democracies a welcome breathing-spell during which to strengthen our defenses.

As we look at it, if Soviet Russia licks Hitler the United States will get a big break. We need fear no attack aggression from Stalin. His hands are out to bore from within. But if Hitler conquers Russia, the threat of aggression against the United States may become more real than at this writing. It will be able to throw into the fight against the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, it is practical strategy for us to help Russia lick Hitler.

But if we embrace Soviet Russia as an ally and kiss the Communists in Russia on both cheeks, just think what an opening that would give the Communists in this country. Under the guise of disrupting our war effort, they can discredit democracy from within. Of course, the Communists will say that's the farthest thing from their thoughts. They will insist they want to make America stronger now so that it will be able to help Russia.

Yet it wouldn't surprise us much if the actual trend of thought of the Communists in this country were following an entirely different direction. We can almost hear them thinking out loud. "Our boy Stalin is in a tough spot," they are saying. "The chances are he will get licked. If so, the only Communist regime in the world will be destroyed. Wouldn't it be a smart thing for us to go to work right now to gain control of America the United States so that the Communists won't lost out altogether!"

Our answer to that must be that America will not let her guard but will redouble her vigilance against the penetration of our own defense even while we are helping Communist Russia defend herself against Hitler.

Defense Unemployment Crisis Seen; Unions Urged To Take Safety Steps

Washington, D. C.—American labor faces a new crisis within the next few months, due to the spread of defense unemployment resulting from the application of priority orders to vital materials, the American Federation of Labor's Monthly Survey warned.

From 5,000 to 6,000 plants may be forced to close down, defense officials estimate, and from one million to two million workers thrown out of jobs.

The survey explained:

"These are the chief metals and materials being cut off from civilian goods: Aluminum, iron and steel, zinc, brass, nickel, tin, rubber, silk, and cork.

"Any plant using one of these metals or materials as an essential part of a non-defense product, unless it can find a substitute, will soon be forced to stop non-defense work as soon as priorities cut off its supply or will face forcible production cuts by OPACS. The only hope for such plants and their workers is to change to defense work as quickly as possible. If this cannot be done, workers must look for jobs elsewhere. The following industries and many others will be affected in the near future: Radio receiving sets; refrigerators, metal furniture, radios, tableware, jewelry, rubber goods, silk clothing, linoleum.

"To change a plant from its normal production to defense work is no easy matter; in most cases, a thorough survey of machinery and equipment must be made by engineers to find out what defense items it can make. Or, if equipment cannot be used for defense work, then a thorough search will be needed to find substitutes for the materials cut off. Such studies must be made by highly skilled technical men—engineers, chemists, research men. A small plant rarely has such a man on its staff and cannot afford the high cost of a survey. Then the government should step in to help. It doesn't—technical man all its service.

"Faced with thousands of such cases in thousands of localities government technical men will be so hard pressed in the weeks ahead that they cannot possibly serve all needs. The situation can only be met by cooperation of labor, employers, and government on a national basis and also on a community basis, so that resources can be found and plans developed, and technical men familiar with an industry can make their services reach as far as possible.

"This has already been done in the first industries affected. In aluminum, priorities officers in plants making aluminum consumer goods near Kenosha, Wisconsin, and threw 3,000 out of work. Due to efforts of the American Federation of Labor, engineers from the industry and from defense agencies made a quick study of the situation, and defense contracts were secured for some plants. In silk textiles and hosiery, when priorities in silk threatened 174,000 jobs, an industry committee representing management and labor worked with defense officials to plan combinations of cotton, rayon and silk and manufacturers to release these necessary substitutes. In these two cases plants will probably be kept in operation through this joint action.

"Thousands of such situations face our membership in the weeks ahead. If widespread unemployment is to be prevented, union officers must at once survey the situation in their plants and be ready for immediate action. Does your plant produce civilian goods? Does production depend on one of the materials listed above? If so, report at once to President Green, giving the name of your company and the number of workers concerned. Then urge your employer to get in touch with the Conservation Division, Office of Production Management, Washington, D. C., or the Defense Contract Services, and ask to be given a survey of his equipment. The Defense Contract Service for your town is in the nearest Federal Reserve Bank or branch bank. This service was intended to keep War and Navy Department in touch with small businessmen and help direct them to get contracts or subcontracts. The service, however, fell short of expectations. If the Defense Contract Service cannot give you the assistance needed, then we must get a service that will help.

"In cases where no adjustment to defense work is possible for a plant, workers must be helped to find jobs in a defense industry, and to get the training necessary for new skills required. Here again union officers need to know the resources of the community, where they can apply for defense training; government agents must also be ready to help in the transfer of workers. Go to your local Employment Service and then write to President Roosevelt for compensation for loss of incomes should be immediately available to those whose jobs are taken by priorities or OPACS orders.

"Great resources of man power and equipment are being wasted in forced idleness and lost to the defense program unless unions, employers and government work together for this shift to defense work. Plants may be forced out of business; workers may lose their jobs and their homes. Permanent dislocations of industry may occur; whole communities depending on a single industry may be practically wiped out. Such disasters can be prevented by the action outlined above. Unions bear a grave responsibility for their members."

Britain To Send Two Delegates To AFL Convention In Seattle

President William Green of the American Federation of Labor announced that the British Trades Union Congress is sending two fraternal delegates to this country to attend the next convention of the American Federation of Labor which opens in Seattle on October 6. The delegates are G. W. Thomson, of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draftsmen, and E. Hough, of the Yorkshire Miners' Association. No details as to how or when they will make the hazardous trip have been disclosed.

Both delegates will address the A. F. of L. convention for the purpose of giving American labor fresh, first hand information on the war situation in Europe and the efforts British labor is making to strengthen Britain's defenses.

Mr. Green announced that the Executive Council had designated President Harry Bridges, of the International Longshoremen's Union of North America as the fraternal delegate of the American Federation of Labor to the coming convention of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress which opens in Calgary, Alberta, on September 22nd. Mr. Green also announced that the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress will send a fraternal delegate to the American Federation of Labor convention.

"The American Federation of Labor has always enjoyed close fraternal relations with the British Trades Union Congress," Mr. Green said. "Last year we were fortunate in having Sir Walter Citrine, head of the British labor movement, come to our convention. He made a historic address, one that our delegates will never forget.

"The American Federation of Labor wholeheartedly supports the policy of our Government in extending every possible aid to Great Britain. We are proud of the way the British workers have stood the test. Many of our organizations have contributed generously of their funds to alleviate the sufferings of British workers and their families through the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor. We will extend the delegates from the British Trades Union Congress a most cordial welcome."

New York Express Agency Employes Awarded Wide Increase In Wages

New York, N. Y.—A blanket wage increase of 8.16 per cent for the 3,800 employees of the Railway Express Agency in the metropolitan area was approved by a decision by a mediation board set up under the provisions of the railway labor act to settle a dispute between the company and Locals 450 and 308 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers of America, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor.

The mediation board was composed of two representatives of the employees, two Railway Express representatives and two neutral arbitrators, who were Professor George W. Stocking, of the University of Texas, and Professor I. L. Scharman, of the University of Michigan. The agreement was approved by all but the two employee representatives.

Both parties had agreed in advance to abide by the majority award. The new wage scale will remain in force until December 31, 1942, after which either side may give 30 days' notice of a desire to revise the contract.

Richard J. Sheerin, secretary-treasurer of Local 808, said the decision would increase the average weekly wage of drivers from $42.53 to $46, a rise of $3.47. Helpers will get $37.36, a gain of $2.61 over the present rising factor of $34.81.

News Briefs

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGAINST RADIO ADVERTISING TAX

Chicago, Ill.—The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor adopted a resolution at its meeting here opposing a proposed excise tax on radio advertising.

The council said in its resolution that while labor believes the United States Government should levy extra taxes on the people to pay for defense work "we do not believe in punitive or discriminatory taxation such as a special levy on radio advertising broadcasts."

ENAMELING WORKERS UNION WINS PAY BOOST CONTRACT

Bellaire, O.—A new agreement negotiated by AFL Enameling Workers Union No. 30254 with the Bellaire Enameling and Stamping Company, carries a 10 per cent wage increase with several increases running up to 26 per cent. The company manufactures kitchen ware.

CLOSED SHOP AGREEMENT GAINED BY MEDINA UNION

Medina, O.—A closed shop agreement with AFL Federal Labor Union No. 22583 has been signed by H. W. Madison Company, manufacturer of pickles, salad dressing, mustard, etc.

BRICK INDUSTRY WORKERS GET 34 CENT MINIMUM PAY

Washington, D. C.—The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor ordered a minimum wage of 34 cents an hour for workers employed by firms manufacturing bricks and other fired clay products, except refractories, pottery and ceramic whiteware. The rate was recommended by a majority vote of a committee equally representative of the employers, employees and the public, which investigated economic and competitive conditions in the industry.

It was estimated that approximately 24,000 workers in the 32 southern states will receive higher wages under the 34 cent rate. It was said that few workers are employed at less than 40 cents an hour in brick plants in other sections of the country.

LARGE MEMBERSHIP GAINS LISTED BY BOILERMAKERS

Kansas City, Kans.—Officials of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, AFL affiliate, reported that the union has enjoyed a large gain in membership and collective bargaining are a high level in early July. During July the increase in membership was the greatest for any single month in many years. New agreements have been negotiated with a great variety of industries, and all have carried higher wages, improved working conditions, vacations with pay, seniority rights, checking rights, and many other benefits.

MOTORBUS OPERATORS GET HIGHER WAGE RATE AWARD

Detroit, Mich.—A board of arbitration awarded a wage increase of eight cents an hour to the operators in the suburban service of the Eastern Michigan Motorbuses. The proceedings involved the Michigan Motorbuses in an award of a board of arbitration made on August 12, 1941. Operators on the suburban routes radiating from Detroit, are represented by Division 26 of the Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employes of America, AFL affiliate.

The hourly rate of the operators in the new award is 92 cents, to be paid retroactively from February 1, 1941, the date of termination of the previous contract. Operators on back pay due each operator is approximately $100.00. The award further provides for improvement in the vacation allowance to 12 days with pay.

SUGAR REFINERY UNIONS WIN INCREASED PAY

Washington, D. C.—Fatter pay envelopes and improved work conditions were reported to the American Federation of Labor by AFL unions whose members are employed in sugar beet refineries.

At Sugar Pord, Colo., Beet Sugar Refinery Employes Union No. 21421 won a wage increase of 5 cents to 10 cents per hour in an agreement with the American Crystal Sugar Company. Sugar Refinery Employes Union No. 21201, Scottsbluff, Neb., signed an agreement with the Great Western Sugar Company providing wage increases of 5 cents, 7½ cents and 10 cents per hour, and $7.50 per month, war clause, vacations with pay for hourly paid employes, seniority rights, abolition of split shift, arbitration right, and two hours pay or two hours work clause.

HIGHER PAY PACT SIGNED BY EAST ALTON COMPANY

East Alton, Ill.—AFL Chemical Workers Union No. 22574 has secured an agreement with the East Alton Manufacturing Corp. providing an increase in wages of approximately 5 per cent, retroactive to July 14.

LIVING COST RISES; WORKERS SUFFER LOSS

Living costs have been moving upward at an alarming rate in recent months, showing an increase of 3¼ per cent between March and June of this year.

The Department of Labor index in June was at a higher level than officials had predicted for September of this year. Food prices over the second quarter rose 7¾ per cent and by July had increased still further, standing 9¾ per cent above a year ago. Preliminary reports for the last two weeks of July indicate that this trend in food prices is continuing.

Other retail prices have also gone up rapidly; on July 1, furniture was 12½ per cent above a year ago; cotton wash goods, 8 per cent higher; and floor coverings, 6 per cent higher.

It is generally felt that unless this upward price movement is soon brought under control, serious inflation will result with great loss to workers.

It is estimated that an annual income of $2,126 is required to maintain a minimum adequate living standard for a family of five at today's prices. This means a wage of $1.02 an hour with a 40 hour week and full employment. A bare subsistance living standard for a family of four can be maintained with an income of $1,406 a year, or 67¼ cents an hour."

HIGHER WAGES RECEIVED BY 2,200,000 WORKERS

Washington, D. C.—Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins reported that about 700,000 factory workers received pay increases during the period from May 16 to June 15 a total of 2,200,000 employes in manufacturing industries received increases during the three months ending June 15.

She said that hourly earnings in manufacturing industries averaged 73.8 cents in June, representing an increase of 25 per cent over January, 10.6 per cent over June, 1940, and 32.1 per cent over 1939. Factory wages were $31.34 in June, up 3.1 per cent from the previous month and 23.3 per cent above the 1940 month. The additional increase in weekly earnings as compared with hourly wage rates reflected the rise working hours and payment of overtime.

"Wage rate increases from May 15 to June 15 averaging 9.1 per cent for more than 700,000 wage earners were reported by 1,374 manufacturing plants out of a reporting sample of 33,018 plants employing 7,150,000 wage earners," she said.

Three Units Cooperate to Provide Dresses For 2,400 British Girls

New York, N. Y.—A plan has been inaugurated by the Aid British Labor Committee, Henderson, Ky., which may set a precedent to be followed in other communities on a large scale throughout the United States, with untold stimulus to British-American solidarity.

By pooling their respective resources, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union Local 290, the British War Relief Society and Kentucky Workers Operators of Betty Maid Dress Factory in Henderson, Kentucky, have completed an arrangement whereby 2,400 little girls' dresses will soon be sent as a gift to Great Britain.

About 300 union members are contributing 4 hours of work to manufacture the dresses, the company is granting the use of its plant and the British War Relief Society the necessary materials.

David Dubinsky, president of the ILGWU and secretary of the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor, sent congratulations to members and officers of Local 290 for the "the part you are playing in the manufacture of 2400 dresses for girls in Britain." He hailed "the spirit in which you have begun this consideration," pointing out that "our international union has always been in the forefront in the fight for democracy, and it is fitting that we shall be among the first to move toward a united effort on the part of labor, management and the general public to make this united venture to provide clothing for the children of Britain. Your contribution of work will serve as an example," he concluded. "The labor movement will watch with keen note of what you are doing and, I am certain, will emulate it in every way possible."

Hilbert Wolf, National Chairman of the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor, expressed pleasure and appreciation on learning of the cooperative enterprise. "Your contribution assumes national significance," he said, "as a demonstration of the fundamental unity of labor, management, and the general public, as represented by The British War Relief Society, in the defense of democracy and the promotion of the aid and welfare of those who are fighting for democracy abroad."

2 PHILADELPHIA UNIONS RAISE THEIR WAGE RATES

Philadelphia, Pa.—Two Philadelphia unions, both AFL affiliates, announced increased wage rates benefiting hundreds of union members.

Local 45, of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers, reached an agreement with the millinery manufacturers carrying a ten per cent wage increase for all employees to meet rising costs of living. It was estimated the advance would spread $100,000 a year among 1200 workers in the trade. Present scales range from about $22 to $60 per week.

Local 502, Journeymen Barbers International Union of America, and the Master Barbers Association agreed on pay rises for the journeymen from the present $18 a week plus 50 per cent commission on all sales over $30, to $23 a week plus 50 per cent commission on all sales over $34. Prices for a haircut were raised to 60 cents instead of 40, and for a shave 35 cents instead of 20 cents.

Defeat of All Anti-Labor Bills Hailed As Vindication of Workers

Executive Council Praises Patriotic Policies of AFL In Defense Program

Chicago, Ill.—Concluding its mid-summer session here, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor declared that every major anti-labor proposal thus far acted upon by Congress this year "has been soundly defeated."

In reviewing the record, the Council proclaimed that the cooperative policies of the American Federation of Labor in the national defense program had made the enemies of labor unable to force labor to do something that it was more than willing to do voluntarily.

"The Executive Council, in reviewing the legislative record of the current session of Congress, is gratified to report that every major proposal to shackle organized labor and destroy the freedom of American workers has been soundly defeated.

"The enemies of labor saw in the defense emergency a golden opportunity to deprive the workers of the gains they had won by years of struggle. They tried to frighten the American people into believing that labor was disloyal and out to wreck the defense program. In this propaganda campaign they were given aid and comort by a small group of Communist-controlled unions, not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, which did call a few unwarranted strikes. The enemies of labor tried to magnify these relatively unimportant stoppages into a nationwide strike wave in order to gain support for legislation which would abolish the right to strike.

"But there never was any doubt in the minds of the American people as to where the great majority of American workers stood, as represented by the American Federation of Labor stood. From the very outset, the American Federation of Labor aligned itself in uncompromising opposition to totalitarianism in any and all forms. It advocated the strongest possible national defenses even before the defense program was understaken. It has given the defense program the widest possible support. Voluntarily the American Federation of Labor adopted a no-strike policy which has been lived up to faithfully by more than 99 per cent of its five million members. Voluntarily the representatives of the building trades and metal trades unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor went to the various defense agencies and negotiated stabilization agreements which have speeded up defense production beyond original expectations. Voluntarily the unions of the American Federation of Labor searched their membership lists in order to find skilled workers and sent them at no cost to the Government to the site of important projects where there was a dearth of labor. These facts have been testified to by the responsible heads of the national defense program, and they wholeheartedly endorse the fact that the cooperation of labor has been a key factor in advancing the defense program ahead of schedule.

"When repressive legislative proposals were being considered by the Congress, spokesmen for the American Federation of Labor told Congressional committees that voluntary labor would accomplish miracles of production and that compulsory labor would inevitably fail to bring results, as the record already made proves the truth of this basic contention.

"The Executive Council congratulates the Congress of the United States for its wisdom in rejecting extreme measures against labor and wishes to thank particularly the friends of labor in Congress who battled valiantly in defense of labor's rights."

Mexican President Sends Greetings To AFL In Friendly Bid To U. S.

Chicago, Ill.—Assurance that the United States can work with its national defense preparations without the slightest concern about totalitarian penetration of Mexico were given to Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor by President Manual Avila Camacho of Mexico.

President Camacho's message was transmitted by Matthew Woll, Vice President of the American Federation of Labor, who has just returned from a trip to Mexico City. Mr. Woll went there as a representative of the American Federation of Labor to confer with President Camacho and to attend the convention of CROM, the Mexican Regional Labor Federation.

In reporting to the Council here Mr. Woll brought greetings from President Camacho and assurances that Mexico is fully prepared to stamp out any Nazi, Communist or Fascist fifth column movements that may arise. The President of Mexico declared, Mr. Woll said, that the people of Mexico are firm in their faith and allegiance to democracy and favor friendly collaboration with the United States in defense of the freedom of the Western Hemisphere.

"Mexico to the United States and Mexico" was the theme of a number of addresses, Mr. Woll reported. "At the convention of CROM the flag of the United States was displayed side by side with the Mexican flag. Also the orchestra which marched in with me played the American flag and we carried at the head of the procession. I was enthusiastically cheered by thousands of onlookers in the streets of Mexico City.

"As the time limit, it is obvious that Nazi and Communist influences are on the wane in Mexico," Communist wing in the labor movement, which once exercised a powerful influence over the Mexican government, has lost its strength and standing. Communist labor leaders, like Vincente Lombardo Toledano, have fallen out of favor since the advent of the new administration headed by President Camacho.

"The CROM, which represents more than half a million Mexican workers, declared its satisfaction at its convention at the declaring that the government and labor movement of the United States have no designs on Mexico and favoring closer cooperation between the two countries.

"The convention also went strongly on record in favor of joining with the American Federation of Labor to confer with President Camacho and to attend the convention of CROM, the Mexican Regional Labor Federation.

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50,000 AIRCRAFT WORKERS ORGANIZED BY MACHINISTS

Washington, D. C.—Vice President Eric Peterson of the International Association of Machinists, AFL affiliate, announced that the union's membership in the aircraft industry now stands at 50,000.

Other Machinists' advances were higher wages negotiated with 65 carriage firms in Detroit; 39 trucking companies in Portland, Ore.; 7 repair shops in Cheyenne, Wyo.; 10 factory branch truck concerns in St. Louis; and seven motor carrier freight lines in Spokane, Wash.

Collective bargaining gains in the aircraft industry are also numerous. At the Lockheed Corp. aircraft plant in Seattle the Machinists secured wage increases of 10 to 15½ cents per hour for over 12,000 employes, bringing the scales to the highest point in the aircraft industry.